

**Remarks Following Discussions With
President Mikheil Saakashvili of
Georgia**

March 19, 2008

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome back to Washington. I was just reminiscing with the President about my trip to Georgia, about the unbelievably good food, and about the dancing. He was wondering whether I'd come back and start my dancing career there, and I told him I'd probably better quit while I'm ahead.

We had a good discussion. I admire the President. I admire what Georgia has gone through and what Georgia is doing. We had an interesting talk about a couple of subjects, one of which is the economic opportunities in Georgia. This is a country which has adopted a very simplified tax code. It's easy for people to understand. I told the American people I tried to simplify our Tax Code. It's difficult to do. I congratulate you on simplifying yours, and I congratulate you about your rates of growth.

We talked about Georgia's contribution to democracy movements, not only her own but to democracy and freedom movements in places like Iraq. The citizens of Georgia must know that the troops that have been provided there are brave, courageous professionals and have made a significant difference. And we want to thank you for that, Mr. President.

We talked about the need for there to be peaceful resolutions of conflicts while recognizing the territorial integrity and sovereign borders of Georgia.

And finally, we, of course, talked about NATO. The Bucharest summit is coming up. Georgia's aspirations will be decided at the Bucharest summit. MAP application, of course, as the President full well knows, is not membership. MAP is a process that will enable NATO members to be comfortable with a country eventually joining. I believe that NATO benefits with a Georgia membership. I believe Georgia benefits from being a part of NATO. And I told the President it's a message I'll be taking to Bucharest soon.

And so, Mr. President, thanks for coming. I'm pleased you're here. I'm glad you brought your wife. Turns out, our wives are

out having lunch together on the town here in DC. And I just told Laura to keep the tab down. [Laughter] I'm working on Government pay these days. But thank you for coming.

President Saakashvili. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I mean, I'm incredibly thrilled to be back in the Oval Office. And, you know, we've been essential part of your freedom agenda. I was not President when I heard your speech in Warsaw, when you spoke about freedom between Baltics and Black Sea. And that was extremely visionary speech because you spoke about the Black Sea at the moment when nobody wanted to look in our direction. And I think we are—what we are up to now is to implement this freedom agenda to the end, for the sake of our people, for the sake of our values, for the sake of what the United States means for all of us, because the U.S. is exporting idealism to the rest of the world.

And we believe that, you know, we have very, very strong partnerships. We have a very, very strong partnership in democracy building. We have a very strong partnership in our military cooperation, because I'm very proud the Georgian troops in Iraq are not just controlling and are present there protecting people but are having success in doing so. And certainly this is something that we will state over generations.

I have to thank you, Mr. President, for your unwavering support for our freedom, for our democracy, for our territorial sovereignty, and for protecting Georgia's borders and for Georgia's NATO aspirations. I think this is a very unequivocal support we are getting from you.

And, you know, this is the last year of your administration, but I can tell you, what you've done for—not only for my country but what you've done for all over the region will be remembered greatly and will be remembered as absolutely revolutionary change of way of thinking, of environment, of giving chances to the people who never thought about having those opportunities and chances before. That's what America is all about. That's what Bush freedom agenda is all about. And we are very proud to be part of that agenda, Mr. President.

You should know that this will stay as a photographic memory in our people's mind, and we will always remember it. We'll never—and we are very grateful, of course. You will dance Georgian dance much better than I do. [Laughter] You are invited back, to come. You've shown considerable talent. [Laughter] I know you're not Georgian; you're a Texan. But we are pretty close. [Laughter] But deep in your mind, you should have something Georgian. [Laughter]

President Bush. That's right. [Laughter]

President Saakashvili. That's for sure. And, I mean, we certainly—and if you don't want to dance with us, then you can come and bike with us or do anything. But you're always welcome back as somebody who really put Georgia firmly on the world's freedom map—and not only Georgia but many of the countries in the region—and gave us a chance. I think we will continue this cooperation.

I thank you for your support today. We've heard today everything we wanted to hear from the leader of the free world, and I think that's going to give a new opportunities opening to my people. I'm bringing back hope and inspiration.

President Bush. Thank you, buddy.

President Saakashvili. Thanks.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sandra E. Roelofs, wife of President Saakashvili.

Statement on the 175th Anniversary of Thailand-United States Relations

March 19, 2008

Laura and I join in celebrating the 175th anniversary of relations between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand. The United States and Thailand have long been linked by bonds of trust, appreciation, and friendship. The Treaty of Amity and Commerce, signed on March 20, 1833, solidified our commitment to working together for mutual benefit and marked the first

agreement of its kind between the United States and an Asian nation. Over the past 175 years, our two governments have worked together on issues such as economic development, health care, and security. Today, we share a commitment to democracy and to free and fair trade, as well as a respect for human rights. Our tradition of cooperation and support remains strong.

I thank His Majesty the King and the citizens of Thailand for our enduring partnership. This anniversary is an opportunity to underscore our shared ideal of liberty and reinforce our bonds of friendship and understanding. We are proud to celebrate this historic day.

NOTE: The statement referred to King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand.

Statement on the Appointment of Kenneth L. Wainstein as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

March 19, 2008

I am pleased to announce that I have selected Kenneth L. Wainstein to serve as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. Ken is a proven leader and a dedicated public servant with nearly two decades of law enforcement experience, including as United States Attorney for the District of Columbia. As Assistant Attorney General for National Security, he helped improve our ability to confront the threats of a new era. His experience at the Federal Bureau of Investigation as general counsel and Chief of Staff has provided him with a clear understanding of the dangers we face and the importance of ensuring that we have the necessary tools to protect America.

In his new role, Ken will coordinate our Nation's homeland security efforts to ensure that we continue to make progress on combating terrorism, securing our borders, and strengthening our emergency preparedness. I look forward to working with Ken to make America safer.